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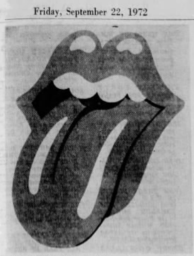

ROLLING STONES' logo has metaphysical connection with theory of rock music.

Theory of Rock Music Won't Stand for Any Lip

By BILLY ALTMAN

In his book, "The Aesthetics of Rock," Richard Meltzer attempts to introduce unschooled listeners to the intricate and wonderful workings of rock 'n roll through his expansive theory of "tongues."

Let it be known that every rock critic who considers himself worth at least one worn copy of "Louie Louie" has some theory or theories regarding the rock 'n roll universe.

In my alter ego as WBFO's Lonely Dragster, I often resort to some pet theories to tie together two hopelessly different pieces of music.

An example is the Goldner-Spector-Wilson — 2:58-or-bust theory, whereby a 45 record's sales and popularity is measured universally to any timing over 2:30. The longer the song, the less likely it will hold its listeners' attention. "Layla," by Derek and the Dominoes, is an obvious exception, but it's really two songs in one.

But the subject here is "tongues," and since it will take awhile, we might as well get into it — pass the plates and knives, please. The "tongue" is that glorious space in time that acts as an intermediary for expectation and fulfillment, that magical connection between the past and the future, embodied in the present. Almost anything can be a "tongue." The birth process is a "tongue," culminated by the space between the drawn back hand of the doctor and the newborn infant's rear. That's a "tongue." If you've got that, the rest is simple.

* * *

RELIGION TELLS us that all of life is a "tongue" to be concluded when we reach our post-mortal destinations. Viewed in "tongue" terms, it's easy to explain why baseball has been the national pastime for so long, spiced as it is with endless "tongue" combinations for each pitch, each out, each inning.

Romantic poet John Keats was particularly obsessed with the notion of "tongues," though he never called it that. Doomed to an early death by sickness, Keats sought shelter in trying to live in the realm of expectations rather than fulfillments, so that he could be satisfied by fantasies rather than actual occurrences.

In the "Eve of St. Agnes" he weaves a tale around a legend that tells maidens that they will dream of their first lovers on this one enchanted night. The girl in the poem is dreaming of the exact moment of passionate love when her lover, who has connived his way into her room, awakens her and makes love to her. The poem drops off at the awakening, making a case for the expectation rather than the fulfillment.

In "Ode to a Grecian Urn," however, Keats reaches true bliss in his fusion of ideas. The painted urn depicts two lovers not quite touching each other. They are either about to embrace or are just separating. Through this image, Keats reaches the perfect balance beteen expectation and fulfillment.

It is in music, and for this discussion, rock, that the "tongue" serves its purpose supremely and majestically. "Tongues" generally deliver their unspoken message better than anything save perhaps a bowl of unmoistened Rice Krispies.

* * *

IN THIS electronic age of general blahness, music has found itself under attack by various "tongue" depressors. Check out the piped in music at the supermarket or local restaurant. This easy listening mush never quite captures your attention. It never rises or falls, and all its stops are perfectly metered. There is no challenge involved in hearing this stuff.

I don't think it's by chance that most of rock's supreme momements have been furnished by groups with a good amount of "tongue" consciousness, groups like the Beatles, the Stones, the Byrds and The Who. To cite and example or two from each might help:

The beginning of "She Loves You." Is it vocal or instrumental? Get out your scratchy copy, spin it, and you'll notice that there's a split-second drum roll that leads into the vocal refrain. Expectation is held in place just long enough to mold the fulfillment reaction when the lads begin singing.

It's perfectly fitting in this light for the Rolling Stones logo to be a giant tongue. Keith Richards might be the rhythm guitar king of the world (Jeff Beck gets my nod for lead guitar). Think of all the Stones songs that begin with his choppy, unpredictable and amazing chords. The fuzz tones on "Satisfaction" (the "tongue" here being the sound of the fuzz tone being switched on; you can actually hear it) and the aching space between the first two chords of "Brown Sugar." Perfect "tongues" that make the songs classics.

Peter Townshend of The Who plays his chords similarly, best noticed on early hits like "Substitute" and "Can't Explain." The spaces are all important, with each successive one bringing the song that much closer to realization. "Pinball Wizard" is certainly up there in this area.

* * *

THE BYRDS are from the Los Angeles "tongue" department, and have always been highly advanced in "tongue" usage. The carved-out bass line of "Mr. Tambourine Man," the silent seconds at the end of "Turn, Turn, Turn." In "Eight Miles High," the guitars, bass, drums, and vocals all start as different "tongue" vehicles, acting independently to create one giant "tongue" mass, culminated by the lines "Eight miles high — and when you touch down," the hyphen being the "tongue" realization.

Meltzer refers to the Doors as a "post-tongue" band, having already understood "tongue" power, and in search of new shores. Each song on their first album ends cold (in other words, they just stop). By the time you get to side two, you anticipate the pattern.

The "post-tongue" occurs when, on "Take It as It Comes," the music stops for a full second, then begins again. When it stops once more, you're waiting for another start, but it doesn't come. Similarly, "Light My Fire," which begins with the drummer's rim shot, has one just near the end, giving the impression that the song is one continuous circle of music. As ace "tongue" inducer, Lou Reed, says, "the possibility's endless."

The newest band to incorporate true "tongue" expression is the Blue Oyster Cult. A veritable juggernaut mammoth, devil - inspired power, the Cult just might steamroll teen-age America with "tongue" consciousness. And wouldn't you know it, a young man named Richard Meltzer helps write their songs.

Whether employed by Beethoven, Ornette Coleman or Little Richard, the "tongue" is the universal that makes music such an exciting experience for me, and I hope for you. Thanks for listening, my tongue's a bit tired out.

Billy Altman is a founding member and the first graduate of the Institute for Rock 'n' Roll Studies at the State University of Buffalo. He is "The Lonely Dragster" on the school's FM radio station, WBFO, and contributes rock music reviews to The Buffalo Evening News.

Dancers Look to New York

The Company of Man, dance-theater company directed by Graham Smith and Cristyne Lawson, will premiere its major production of the year in Studio Arena Theater in early spring prior to the company's national debut in New York's Cafe La Mama, famed launching pad of the avant-garde. Details of the production will be announced later.

The company's school enrollment has tripled since moving into a permanent studio at 531 Elmwood Ave. early this year, Miss Lawson said, noting the company instructs all students of the New School of Performing Arts and University of Buffalo advanced dance students. Lois Rathvon supervises the former, Linda Swiniuch the latter.

Where to take the kids?

Enticements for children are being readied by several institutions and groups in the Buffalo area.

The history of bicycling will be recalled in a show, "Big Wheels of Buffalo," at the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society starting Oct. 1. The exhibition is under direction of Mrs. Mary Ann Sandoro, curator of education, and will feature several bicycles of earlier days.

The Historical Society also expects to open its 1890s Street installation, complete with an old trolly car, in November. Its free film series for children and adults begins Sept. 30 and will take place at 2 PM on Saturdays and 2:30 Sundays.

The NOW Children's Theater at the Kenan Center, 433 Locust St., Lockport, already has opened its season with performances of "The Present," a play in which memories are stirred up by a bunch of hobos, tales about the Lone Ranger, Yo-Yos, etc.

"The Present" will be staged at 2 PM tomorrow, under direction of Louis Martinez.

* * *

A NEW improvisational bit of theater, in which children in the audience will help create action with the NOW performers, is scheduled at 2 PM Oct. 7, 14 and 21 under the title, "Kid Kollage."

Another play by the NOW group, "Short Mark Wears a Tall Hat," based on a Dr. Seuss book, will be presented at the Kenan Center at 2 PM Nov. 25, Dec. 2, 9 and 16. Admission is always 75 cents or $3.00 for a family.

The Albright-Knox Art Gallery will begin its fall schedule of Creative Art Classes Oct. 28 and 29, for ages 4 through teens. Painting, drawing, sculpture and graphics will be among the media the children will work with. Tuition is $30, and applications must be sent by mail to the Education Department.

The gallery will stage its annual Family Holiday Festival Dec. 28-30. Art Classes for daughters 4 and 5 and their mothers will be held Dec. 28 and for daughters 6-8 and their mothers on Dec. 29. Films will be shown on Dec. 30.

The gallery's "Children's Room opens Oct. 28 and will be open Saturdays from 10-4 and Sundays from 1-4. Young children may use the facilities under supervision while their parents see the exhibits.

The Museum of Science's Saturday classes for children begin tomorrow and will continue through March.

The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library also has special programs and films for children downtown and at the branches.

Royale Dance Concerts

The Royale Dance Theater, directed by Bernadine DeMike of Lackawanna, begins its season of concerts and lecture demonstrations in the spring, first touring schools in Western New York with its own company supplemented with guest artists from the Pennsylvania Ballet Company and later performing in concert.

Works presently in preparation include "Gigi," the French comedy ballet choreographed by Mrs. DeMike; "Plea for Life," a multi-media rock ballet; "Mignon Pas de deux" and Pas de deux from Romeo and Juliet;" "Reflections '73," utilizing the work of Toulouse Lautrec; "Americana," a hoedown to American folk music; "The Wedding," developing Italian culture with Italian folk music, and "The Russian Class," an elaboration on dance training.

Tentative arrangements call for the company to perform in schools systems in Alleghany, Chautauqua, Genesee, Niagara and Erie Counties between April 30 and June 11.

Graphics Show In Gallery West

Gallery West has delayed the opening of its fall season until Oct. 1, when, from 4-7 PM, it will present "International Graphics VII." The gallery is at 311 Bryant St.

The exhibitions, continuing through Oct. 25, will feature prints in various techniques by artists who have worldwide reputations. A few banners will be included.

The gallery's year-long show schedule is in the making, only actual dates holding up some announcements.

At Christmas, the gallery space will be divided into six boutiques spotlighting crafts and prints.

Among exhibitions in the planning are a painting show, two sculpture shows — one of large wood and stone pieces and the other of motorized plexiglass works — and a Pro-Am show of faculty members from area colleges and universities and talented advanced students.

Gallery West also contemplates a Young Printmakers Show featuring talents in the East; a Midwest Show, consisting of artists from Chicago and other Midwestern points, and a large juried show by a local artists' organization.

Black Plays

"Andrew — A Play in Remembrance" by Clay Goss will be the first fall production of the Black Drama Workshop. Ron Wofford will direct the play for a tentative Oct. 20 opening.

Workshop director Ed Smith is planning a series of theater productions, the remainder of which will be announced later.

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